THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. However, the news item is incorrect. Deputy Director, World Heritage Centre alongwith a consultant to UNESCO visited Fatehpur Sikri and inspected important protected monuments and the site where a tourist facilitation centre and a parking lot are being contemplated. She only suggested that the development activities should not interfere with the integrity and authenticity of the World Heritage Site, which in any case are always kept in view.

(c) UNESCO has not provided any funds for renovation of Fatehpur Sikri.

(d) A long-term perspective programme has been drawn to take up requisite structural repairs, to develop the environs and a master plan has been drawn up to develop a shopping plaza, a car park, an interpretation and documentation centre.

Inclusion of Cheraideo in World Heritage Site

3366. SHRI DRUPAD BORGOHAIN: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Guwahati circle of Archaeological Survey of India conducted excavation at Cheraideo in Sivasagar District;

(b) if so, what measures are proposed to be taken for the preservation of the exposed underground royal burial structure, human remains and other articles discovered inside the "Maidaam" (tomb); and

(c) whether any scheme is being prepared to include Cheraideo as World Heritage Site, as it possesses a large number of such unique Royal Mausoleum far from thirteenth to nineteenth centuries?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Archaeological Survey of India has decided to undertake, on the burial mound namely, Maidam No. 2 at Charaideo, District Sibsagar, Assam, the work of closing the drill hole that was made during the British Period, to conserve the exposed underground burial chamber and make it accessible to the visitors and also to clean, preserve and study the remains of the interred human bodily remains and the associated

objects discovered during excavation on the monument. The exposed octagonal wall running round the mound has already been conserved.

(c) There is no such proposal at present.

Development of tourist spots in Maharashtra

3367. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the schemes of Government to develop tourists spots in the country, particularly in the State of Maharashtra;

(b) the number of foreign tourists who visited Maharashtra during the year 2002-2003; and

(c) the steps taken or proposed to be taken by Government to increase the flow of foreign tourists in Maharashtra?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) to (c) Information is being collected and would be placed on the Table of the House.

Development of tourism in Eastern States

3368. SHRI SURENDRA LATH : Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a proposal to set up a special task force for the development of tourism in the Eastern States;

(b) if so, the steps taken in that regard; and

(c) if not, what other steps are being taken to tap the tourist potential of the Eastern States and develop the infrastructure to attract more number domestic as well as foreign tourists to those States?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) No, Sir,

(b) Does not arise.

(c) During the Ninth Plan, 181 projects with Central financial assistance of Rs. 3629.01 lakhs were sanctioned in the Eastern States of Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal.